

Interviewer: [Begins mid-sentence] into Harlan.

Red Poole: Well, I couldn't say that. I'm not sure about that.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Red Poole: [Inaudible]. See, when I get that [inaudible] my father being president of the local. In 1917-18 – and he died in [crosstalk] – That was in Bell County.

[Crosstalk]

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Red Poole: That's the next county. You know Little Springs where Middlesboro is?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Red Poole: Over there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Red Poole: All right, I could say three miles out of Middlesboro, Drabenton, Kentucky, is the name of the post office. [Inaudible].

Grant Howard: The first year that I can remember in this county – I'm not old enough to _____ -- my brother can go back further than I can – was the first time they organized up here _____ at Black Mountain.

Red Poole: It was right here, '22.

Grant Howard: 1922.

Red Poole: It could have been in '21, though.

Grant Howard: Well it could have been.

Red Poole: The last part. Now see this guy, Gers, (0:50) was --

Grant Howard: That was before Childers come here.

Red Poole: Oh yeah, yeah.

Grant Howard: And after Childers to come here, he roped me in.

Red Poole: Yeah.

Red Poole 2: And he roped me in – didn't have – couldn't organize no more until old man Asbury [crosstalk] –

Red Poole: Excuse me a minute [crosstalk] over here.

Interviewer: And who was this guy Childers? Childers, his name was?

Grant Howard: He was the superintendent of _____ 930.

Interviewer: And he was just a real [crosstalk]?

Grant Howard: I forget his first name – Red, probably remember it but I don't remember it.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Grant Howard: I believe the other man was Smith. [Inaudible]. They started organizing again back in 1931 after that – maybe '30 when they started on again. I know they [inaudible] that's when they had the trouble. That's when they had the Battle of Evarts. They was [inaudible]. And they was still working, with no men killed or died. Then when he died, [inaudible] sent in E.J. Asbury as superintendent. Well he recognized the union. And they started organizing these other mines. [Inaudible]. Now he marched – I seen him march a mile long. And I mean all men, women and all.

I was telling her about the time the old lady Hendricks and three other women tore up that machine gun nest down there at Brookside, on the other side of the bridge [crosstalk]. Had a machine gun sitting up on the side of the hill and this old lady Hendricks, Ben's wife, [crosstalk] Ben Hendricks was up there. And two more women, this three of them, went up there and [inaudible] that machine gun and tore it down.

Red Poole: They [inaudible], didn't they? I was gone the day (3:00) that happened.

Grant Howard: Yeah, but I was just a little barefoot boy, a teenager when all this was all going on. But I was in the picket lines and marching with them. I was with Bill Gibbs the time that they – they tried to run him off of Kitchdale right there, [inaudible]. Bill Gibbs and Johnny Madden and a bunch of them.

Red Poole: Me and Johnny and Bill Epps and Bud Epps were the only ones that _____ back. Alan was supposed to go [crosstalk].

Grant Howard: Well you talking Holbrook – Holbrook's half-brother to Johnny, _____.

Red Poole: Half-brother to Johnny Madden? Half? Is he? I didn't know that.

Grant Howard: Yeah.

Red Poole: I didn't know that.

Interviewer: Yeah, one thing that you might tell me about is what kind of ways the union helped you in '31. Did they set up soup kitchens? Did they come in with – you know, did they provide you with clothes? How did they help out?

Red Poole: Yeah, they [*crosstalk*]. I don't know who set them soup kitchens up but there was two here, wasn't there?

Grant Howard: Well there was one in Harlan. [*Crosstalk*] Theirs' got blown up. They had one in Red Bud; they [*crosstalk*].

Red Poole: [*Crosstalk*].

Interviewer: Yeah?

Grant Howard: That there where that _____ is at?

Interviewer: Yeah?

Grant Howard: I used to have a house out the road there, the kitchen area used to look out the road.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Grant Howard: Had a big long red building sitting there [*crosstalk*] --

Red Poole: Where the old post office used to be?

Interviewer: That was a soup kitchen right there?

Grant Howard: That's a soup kitchen in there. Used to be a great big store there. They blowed it up.

Red Poole: When that Stewart at the post office there, was a big store.

Grant Howard: Yes. Soup kitchen was in the back.

Red Poole: You had two girls, Grace and May, didn't they?

Grant Howard: Yeah.

Red Poole: They ever have a boy?

Grant Howard: Yeah, Gene Berry.

Red Poole: I remember *[crosstalk]*.

Grant Howard: He *[inaudible]* young girls.

Red Poole: Him and them girls though.

Grant Howard: I tell you, the saddest story of the whole thing is, I think Red, George Jones, Bill Gibbs – I think Bill finally got his pension.

Red Poole: Yeah, they all dead now.

Grant Howard: Old man Long, the old Mr. Long– George Jones, you know how he treated– (5:07) how strong George was, Nigger George *[inaudible]*. He had a *[inaudible]* killed every one of them. And _____ while Lewis _____ John _____. He went to Washington, try to get his pension and they throwed him out in the street.

Interviewer: Lewis did that?

Grant Howard: Huh?

Interviewer: Lewis did that?

Grant Howard: Yeah, Lewis, everybody.

Interviewer: Because they didn't meet the provisions of him *[crosstalk]*?

Grant Howard: Well that was their excuse: he didn't meet the provision but there wasn't no provisions set up for no *[crosstalk]* organize this _____. They were treating him that way. They ain't going to *[inaudible]* no way. George jones died up there *[crosstalk]* Sanctified Hill, little old two-room shack --

Red Poole: It _____ up there, _____ write them letters *[inaudible]* I don't know if you read them or not. I just figured that when I was writing back to *[inaudible]*. It looked like I was fighting a losing battle, see, and I *[inaudible]* for a damn good cause and I know

that. See I wasn't married and I wasn't trying to get a damn thing _____ through. I was thinking about you, _____. Had no kids – I didn't have nobody. My _____ just me. And I know that I can get by. That's the way I felt. Because _____ do it.

Grant Howard: You can look around here and see, it's got to be *[inaudible]* if enough people was into it. The ones that was always at the company and they stayed with it, then they worked with them – they always kept their job and all of them go on pension.

Interviewer: Oh.

Red Poole: Well there was Al – his brother-in-law worked in that office just like that old trail blazer for anybody else, if I talked to him. There's another *[inaudible]*. We tried to get our pensions, all of us. And I thought we was _____. I still think we served our purpose.

Grant Howard: That's right.

Red Poole: And Al got his and he come the closest _____ that has in 20 years, but he didn't have 17 years -- _____ he'd not have it for 17 years. All right? Jim Reynolds killed another man after he got out. And he done 13 more years and three months. Yet he got his pension. Old man Hosteller was 77 when he was locked up – now get this – he was 80 when he got out. He didn't hit a lick while he was in there. He couldn't. He was too old. He lived to be 90 *[laughs]*. That was – you know, I couldn't believe that. Yet he dies, they said he worked down in Tennessee, they said Jim worked down there. Jim worked – doing time, yeah. Not in no mine. Old Red, while Jim was doing 13 year and 3 months in the pen, when Jim gets out here comes up, back pay and everything, you know. And he's _____ pay. He gets his pension and Al gets his; old man Hosteller got his. Now while he done that time I'm up there running the motor. I got 11 years and 7 months right up here, while he was doing time, and I don't get it, he did. That's why I say something's wrong.

Grant Howard: Oh I know *[crosstalk]* bullshit.

Red Poole: Yeah.

Grant Howard: You give a certain fellow here, yeah, probably get a couple thousand dollar *[inaudible]* and he got his pension ready.

Red Poole: That's right.

Grant Howard: These three got several houses down the road here, [crosstalk] coal mines.

Red Poole: [Crosstalk] steelworker, that's like it is. I [crosstalk] pension, I just [inaudible]. I don't pull my punches, I just say like I think.

Grant Howard: [Laughs]. That's [inaudible] – what's the Secretary of the Treasurer's name there?

Interviewer: Harry Patrick?

Grant Howard: Patrick – Patrick.

Red Poole: Did he come listen at your speech? Walsh? Did he come this year?

Grant Howard: No, no Walsh wasn't there, no. Dawson [crosstalk], Lloyd Dawson.

Red Poole: This guy here, he was there.

Grant Howard: Yeah.

Red Poole: He was vice president.

Grant Howard: Yeah, he [inaudible] for him. He was there – he was in Washington [crosstalk]. That's what he done. Just worked for him.

Red Poole: Well that's the _____. That's about it. I ain't got no use for it.

Grant Howard: [Thunder] them boys killed.

Red Poole: I heard that.

Grant Howard: I know it's the truth.

Red Poole: I surely heard that.

Grant Howard: Him and Deputy Jones pulled up, [inaudible] the next morning they all were killed.

Red Poole: That's Polk Ridge, or --?

Grant Howard: Huh?

Red Poole: That Polk Ridge, or [crosstalk]?

Grant Howard: No, Gum Street.

Red Poole: But you see, he's always been the law sometime – deputy sheriff, stuff like that. You know, a nosey man. You know, who thinks – sticks his nose in every damn thing that's coming along. He's always been that way, I know that.

Grant Howard: [Inaudible] and he put him on [inaudible] [laughs]. [Inaudible].

Red Poole: He's always had an easy job, let's put it that way.

Grant Howard: Yep.

Red Poole: I speak to him [inaudible], that's about it.

Grant Howard: And you talk to Bill _____ -- Bill Peet.

Red Poole: Not lately. Since _____, nuh-uh.

Grant Howard: Well, not since he got [crosstalk]. Huh?

Red Poole: Did he go down there to that meeting?

Grant Howard: No that's [inaudible].

Red Poole: I don't remember whether he was or not.

Grant Howard: He might have been there but I didn't see him. [Crosstalk] a lot of people there I didn't see. [Inaudible] standing all around the hall, way out in the lobby.

Red Poole: [Inaudible] when you see something like that you know somebody needs [inaudible]. You know it. When you see a crowd like that somebody's needing some attention. They need somebody's advice, or they wouldn't be there. Not like it used to.

Grant Howard: I'd like for my own satisfaction-

Red Poole: [Thunder]?

Grant Howard: See a change. _____, he told them right there on the stage, he said [inaudible] talked about [crosstalk].

Red Poole: That's how it start and do it. Don't pick up [inaudible, laughs].

Grant Howard: [Thunder]. Wouldn't it be nice? Oh my. We got a [inaudible]. Fellow like me and you – if you just go on back about 25, 30 years, work like you did when you was organizing.

Red Poole: Oh yes.

Grant Howard: You get to knock on these people's doors and talk to you; they listened to old Red. They always did do it.

Red Poole: Oh yes. I know that too. But it is a hard living but you got your obligation at the same time. [Inaudible].

Grant Howard: Yeah, if she stays with us long enough I'm going to take her up there and show her where [crosstalk] --

Interviewer: Oh I'd like to see that, yeah.

Grant Howard: [Laughs]. That's where we used to hide out.

Red Poole: [Inaudible]. Can you go far back through there? I guess you could.

Grant Howard: Yeah, you can now.

Interviewer: What was that like, the day you took the obligation?

Red Poole: What?

Interviewer: What was that like that day? You want to describe that to me?

Red Poole: Well it's just there's 100 redbones taking the obligation at the same time. You know, instead of giving it to you and then asking you to give it to him, just take and give it to everybody, see? And then they --

Grant Howard: They ain't no greater feeling in the world taking the obligation of the United Mineworker. It's one of the most sacred documents that your skin wrote.

Red Poole: It's nice. And [thunder] there's some paragraph in it and you supposed to repeat it after this man says it – I don't remember exactly – not [inaudible] there, but they always ask you to repeat after the man that gives it. Do you remember it? I don't remember it. Just a few words.

Grant Howard: No, I didn't know the whole thing. I didn't remember, but _____ I can quote it by heart.

Red Poole: But there was [crosstalk]. And [crosstalk] --

Grant Howard: [Crosstalk] the job; you always aid and assist a brother in distress -
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Red Poole: And anything that's his _____ his _____ do it. And something about no wrongdoing. I forget how that's worded, though.

Grant Howard: That's what they got _____ on.

Red Poole: Yeah.

Grant Howard: But they took the constitution out.

Red Poole: Yeah.

Grant Howard: So that [inaudible]. I bet they don't even [laughs] talk at all.

Red Poole: Probably that's right _____ .

Grant Howard: Well that looks good [crosstalk] all the calls you got down there, everybody [thunder]. They bring the house down. I mean they interrupt you five, six times in a speech that --

Red Poole: I [crosstalk]. I never was in there.

Grant Howard: We can seat 400.

Red Poole: Yeah?

Grant Howard: We can seat 400 people, got 400 chairs.

Interviewer: Oh, there were more than that.

Grant Howard: And they were standing all around the sides, sitting in [crosstalk] -
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Red Poole: In the aisle, yep.

Grant Howard: -- I the aisle, sitting in the weather, all the way out there in the lobby and over in the [crosstalk].

Red Poole: Outside.

Grant Howard: No, they didn't have a PA system outside but you could hear it from, you know, back in the lobby there.

Red Poole: Yeah.

Grant Howard: *[Thunder, inaudible]*. Lightning there.

Red Poole: All I know is *[inaudible]*.

[Off mic conversation to 0:15:50]

Interviewer: It sure got dark in a hurry.

Grant Howard: Didn't it? *[Thunder]* It kind of got cloudy there.

Well, you satisfied?

Interviewer: Well, any other stuff that you remember that you'd want to be set down and remembered?

Red Poole: Well, I don't know what *[thunder]* it would be. The only thing I know is just what I said, a dozen times and – Virginia knows all that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Red Poole: When I went; when I come back here. Got locked up in '31; got out in '41. And that's why I did that was trying to organize, see? That's just how it is.

Interviewer: When you were – at the trial did you have a lawyer?

Red Poole: I had eight.

Interviewer: Who provided your lawyer?

Red Poole: Union.

Interviewer: There's nothing they could do?

Red Poole: No. What it was; I thought it was over with. I had two more charges – killed two more people.

Interviewer: But what I'm trying to understand, see, so when you finally organized it wasn't directly because of all these battles you had

since they passed the Wagner Act and the operator and them all just had to do it?

Grant Howard: That's right. That's the reason it was organized in this county: old man Roosevelt, Wagner, beat 'em up. Franklin Roosevelt and Wagner passed the Wagner Act.

Interviewer: So it was pretty well done from the top down.

Grant Howard: Top down. The operator had to give in or go to jail, that's just the size of it.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Grant Howard: But he wasn't now – he had been almost 100 percent when they read it (17:36). I mean if you have benefitted of the Labor Relation Board now had a vote on it like they got now, I got _____ you didn't – it went at least 98 percent. I mean it was that strong. You know, [crosstalk] companies was so powerful they just had money to hire – well, I can say it gummed up forever two men that was working; I know [crosstalk] – I seen them march [crosstalk] – I've seen them march four or five [crosstalk], 25.

Red Poole: Twenty-five – [crosstalk] at 25.

Grant Howard: I seen them --

Red Poole: [Crosstalk], yeah.

Grant Howard: -- to work here, gummed up forever two or three men and they'd march them right in, up the hill to the mine.

Interviewer: What seems amazing is they kept telling the men that they were going to go out of business if they paid any more wages. You know, they didn't have any more money.

Grant Howard: They didn't say that them days.

Interviewer: They didn't? That's just [crosstalk]?

Grant Howard: They said, "To hell with the union. It wasn't going to organize." They wouldn't --

Red Poole: They just didn't accept it, didn't want it, you see?

Grant Howard: Didn't want it.

Red Poole: And their intentions was not to accept it. When it finally came around to that they had to. Either that or else go out of business.

Interviewer: It's just later on they gave that [*crosstalk*] about not having the --

Red Poole: All the union men got killed in this county with the exception of Bob Hodges. Most of them come from right here in Ewart.

Grant Howard: No, Red, they didn't.

Red Poole: What they said was [*thunder*].

Grant Howard: Well I'm talking about later on.

Red Poole: Oh, later on, yeah.

Grant Howard: That there [*crosstalk*] and fellows like that got killed and those who got killed _____, got shot up. They were -- most of them was up from Black Mountain Hollow.

Red Poole: Oh yeah, right here.

Grant Howard: Coming out of [*crosstalk*] '44 [*crosstalk*].

Red Poole: Well just like you said, they to start with, most of them were from right in here. But they wasn't raised out here, you know that. You know that [*crosstalk*]. Very few people that was raised right around in here --

Grant Howard: Organized.

Red Poole: -- that was organized really. You got a few of these Joneses up here and _____ and things like that, been there, born and raised here, well they ain't never been [*inaudible*]. Only what the company would tell them to do. Until we got our union, then they had to go along with the union. See they were [*inaudible*]forced, they were.

Interviewer: So most of the guys who were organizing were from the outside?

Red Poole: Yeah, out of state.

Interviewer: Out of state? Where -- like where?

Grant Howard: Well out of county. Most out of county. [*crosstalk*] --

Interviewer: From Bell County?

Grant Howard: Bell County, yeah.

Interviewer: And they moved in here when the coal company started opening up?

Grant Howard: Yeah.

Red Poole: There was Knox County and McCreary County and all them places down in there.

Grant Howard: You know when I seen that Grover, Grover Harris there _____. Oh he's making sure, him *[crosstalk]*. They were *[crosstalk]*.

Red Poole: Oh yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: What was different about the guys who'd come in from outside and then those who lived here all along?

Grant Howard: Well it's like Red said, they'd come and see his – Red's dad was president at Louisville. They'd come in here from a union county, see, some of them *[crosstalk]* they'd recognize and have those privileges and he's – you know, they had to stand up and fight for their rights.

Red Poole: *[Crosstalk]* union _____ county.

Grant Howard: Yeah. These guys that lived here they had to be told, see, and *[thunder]* we used to call it we had to “baptize” them.

Red Poole: So there were five of us in Tennessee, *[inaudible]* one from, Alabama and one from Colorado and one from Texas.

Grant Howard: They baptized in the name of John L. Lewis all the time *[crosstalk]*.

Interviewer: What?

Grant Howard: It raining out there? *[Laughs]*.

Red Poole: _____you guys in or out?

Female: *[Off mic, inaudible]*.

Red Poole: You see George up there in the work?

Female: *[Inaudible]*.

Grant Howard: I got a cat named George. *[Laughs, crosstalk]*.

Red Poole: *[Crosstalk]*.

Grant Howard: "Look it here, Daddy, what I done."

Red Poole: What's his name? He ain't got none? He say, "Look, he got one now." He said, "What?" "George." He been called George ever since.

Grant Howard: *[Laughs]*.

Red Poole: He's a tom cat _____.

Grant Howard: Do you remember George Sampson the cardinal?

Red Poole: Seems like I do. Tyler Hammond, you remember him?

Grant Howard: Yeah.

Interviewer: Hold on.

[End of Audio]